

**This is Nicholas Alahverdian.
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future.**

Nicholas Alahverdian (1987–2020) joined by Rep. Doreen Costa and Rep. Mike Chippendale in a press conference on his court case (eventually settled out of court without a jury trial but did provide evidence of abuse in RI care) and the legislation that would have helped to fix a broken DCYF

Good Morning:

This is Nicholas Alahverdian. We are having this press conference today because Rhode Island needs to know. You need to know. About DCYF. About tax-funded torture. And how to amp up our efforts as a community to reform the system for the future.

Today we meet nearly two years after Representative Bob DaSilva boldly introduced legislation to halt the reprehensible

practice of placing Rhode Island children in out of state placements. Within the past week, we have seen progress in my federal court case, Nicholas Alahverdian versus RI DCYF, for events that occurred following my employment with the Rhode Island House of Representatives.

Earlier this week, US District Court Judge John J. McConnell Jr. granted several motions to withdraw motions to dismiss. Judge McConnell also overruled the State of Nebraska's motion to dismiss as well as a second motion to dismiss. In a Target 12 investigation released earlier this week, Walt Buteau brought to light an itemized lien, issued by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, that requests reimbursement from any potential settlement for costs associated with my time in the care and custody of RI DCYF.

Upon my preliminary observation and in the opinion of those who join me here today, the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, responsible for the tempest that ensued in my life between 2002 and 2005, has shamelessly overstepped ethical boundaries by and through the request for \$206,918.39 from any potential settlement that may be reached in Nicholas Alahverdian v. RI DCYF.

The characteristics of this lien indicate that the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations desires to be reimbursed for costs that the State incurred while I was in the care and custody of the RI DCYF. These costs include per diem rates for group homes and shelters, including Communities for People, Inc. of Boston and Community Solutions, Inc. of

Connecticut, two placements which have been shut down by state officials multiple times for abuse and negligence.

Additionally, the State of Rhode Island wishes to be reimbursed for hospitalizations that were necessary because of the physical and sexual abuse upon my person at Communities for People and Community Solutions, as well as several other placements. The State has thereby made a faulty determination that I am responsible for costs which were incurred as a proximate result of sexually and physically abusive behavior by the agencies with which it has contracts.

Nearly two years ago, I stood in the rotunda of this State House and detailed the years of pain and horror following my employment with the Rhode Island House of Representatives. As a state employee, hired by Speaker Gordon D. Fox himself, I began to arrive in the House Chamber covered in bruises, cuts, and other injuries, while I carried the burden of nightly violence against me that ensued in night-to-night shelters.

When I began to speak to the media in late 2002 and early 2003, Judge Jeremiah S. Jeremiah, former DCYF Director Jay G. Lindgren, and Governor Donald L. Carcieri took the steps to exile me from Rhode Island until my 18th birthday, where I was not allowed to contact any legislators, lawyers, the courts, the media, or even my DCYF social worker or the Child Advocate. Following that press conference, the DCYF, against state laws pertaining to the confidentiality of records of abuse and neglect, publicly stated that there were, and I quote, “no

substantiated findings of abuse in Nicholas Alahverdian's case." That statement was false.

Only yesterday, as the state's assertion of a lien against a child garnished media attention, an EOHHS spokesperson informed representatives of the press that the assertion of a lien on a lawsuit was typical and not unusual, and aimed to reimburse the state for services rendered. However, the State of Rhode Island was involved in rendering unconstitutional, abusive, and negligent services and it now seeks to be reimbursed for the rendering of the aforesaid treacherous treatment.

The State's most powerful officials, including Governor Lincoln D. Chafee, Speaker Gordon D. Fox, and Senate President Teresa Paiva-Weed, have done nothing to rectify the abuse and the negligence that I suffered. Furthermore, multiple bills aimed to reform and improve the RI DCYF and halt out of state placements, bills which had over 50 co-sponsors in the House, failed to even be voted in committee to make it out onto the floor for a vote. The state has turned a blind eye to this growing epidemic — but the thunder of a broken system continues to roar.

I finally realized the totality of the disinterest of the state when I was informed that during a status conference in a federal judge's chambers, Judge McConnell inquired of Assistant Attorney General Brenda Baum about why the State had not offered even so much as an apology as a method of settlement. Assistant Attorney General Baum's response was,

and I quote, “Your Honor, I would rather die than apologize to Nicholas Alahverdian.”

Since 2002, I have been taught a hard lesson: being a whistleblower, even if one barely crosses the threshold of effectiveness, leads to further unethical and immoral conduct. This conduct was perpetrated on my person — and the state seeks to be repaid for this conduct.

I have pledged my life and my efforts to ensuring that no Rhode Island child faces similar conduct. I am joined today by two of Rhode Island’s most determined legislators to announce a legislative scheme to terminate the abusive and reckless practices of the state’s most disreputable and heavily criticized department:

First: To supervise and care for Rhode Island’s most vulnerable children, the bill to halt out of state placements will be introduced for the third consecutive year. No child, unless the service required is not offered in Rhode Island, will be sent to another state, far away from family and home and more susceptible to being subjected to unreported abuse and neglect occurring hundreds of miles away.

Second: A Joint Resolution will be introduced to form the emergency oversight commission on the DCYF. Legislators are elected to serve their constituency, and in order to more effectively supervise a rogue entity of our state, we must combat their ability to act without tough, effective oversight. Legislators are the most effective observers, because as they

observe, they can identify areas that can be legislatively improved.

Third: a bill shall be introduced in each chamber that would guarantee the constitutional, personal property, and civil rights of every child placed or treated under the supervision of the DCYF in any public or private facility. Under this bill, no child shall be prevented from contacting an attorney, the courts, the clergy, or law enforcement. The presently codified Children's Bill of Rights will be distributed to each child upon entrance into any department facility in language consistent with the child's comprehension. Each child will also be afforded the right to appeal any decision made by the family court to the Rhode Island Supreme Court.

Just two years ago, a report issued by the National Coalition for Child Protection Reform exposed that the State of Rhode Island has a practice of institutionalizing children at a rate of 80 percent above the national average, and was, and I quote, "exporting children to other states at an alarmingly high rate." With the passage of this new legislation, we will end those practices and vigorously defend reputable service providers, such as St. Mary's Home for Children and local family care. We will also end DCYF's practice of spending \$10 million annually on out of state placements, and instead, divert the funding to enhancing the infrastructure of Rhode Island's system of care.

We send a clear and forceful message to Governor Chafee, to President Paiva-Weed, and to the man who hired me 10 years

ago, Speaker Gordon D. Fox, that we will not falter on this path to justice. We will ensure that the 2013 General Assembly session will hereafter be known as the year that Rhode Island children and adolescents are afforded long overdue victories — a victory of safe family-based homes and placements, a victory of relative normalcy, and a victory that solidifies a bright future for Rhode Island's most vulnerable population. We firmly assert our legislative strategy — and we will confront any foe of this common sense legislation.

Thank you.

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